

Senator Bye and Rep. Walker, Co-Chairs & Members of Human Services Committee, I am Dr. Harvey Corson, Past President of Connecticut Association of the Deaf (CAD), Co-Chair of the CAD Education and Legislative Committee, and Member of the Connecticut Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (CRID) Task Force on Updating Interpreter Standards. I want to thank you for the opportunity to speak before you about this bill.

Since the original enactment of this law and subsequent changes in statutes in 1998 and 2007, there have been significant changes within the interpreting profession serving deaf and hard of hearing persons in this country and within the state of Connecticut.

During 2012 - 2015 the Deaf and Interpreting communities collaborated in establishing and conducting a Task Force on Updating Interpreter Standards 1) to review the status of interpreting services being provided within Connecticut and how we fared compared with other states and 2) to recommend proposed needed updating of the current interpreter law, CT General Statutes, Chapter 814, Section 46a - 33a.

Here is a summary of the issues and concerns that were observed:

****Within the interpreting field, the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (NRID) has recently changed its testing and certification requirements. There has been a focus on upgrading educational and training requirements and improving the overall quality and professionalism of those working within the field.**

****Nationally, the Deaf and Interpreting communities are requiring that qualified interpreters meet higher expectations and standards as the lives of Deaf and Hard of Hearing children and adults do literally depend on the skills of their interpreters. A recent example of this effort is the “Deaf Child’s Bill of Rights”, included in **Section 11 of CT Public Act 12-173, An Act Concerning Individualized Education Programs and Other Issues Relating to Special Education**, requiring a Language and Communication Plan be developed for every child identified as Deaf or Hard of Hearing by the Planning and Placement Team (PPT) of every school district in Connecticut.**

****Due to the fact that there was no monitoring of interpreters working in CT, and no penalties for those who were not in compliance, we have seen broad disregard for the law. Additionally, the current statute provided for no penalties to those who did not comply. This has led to substandard provision of interpreting services in many situations, which can lead to serious outcomes.**

Based on these concerns, and with a commitment to improving and maintaining the quality of interpreting services provided in Connecticut, the CRID Task Force on Updating Interpreter Standards is pleased to see its recommended needed updating/changes incorporated in this proposed legislation, Raised HB #6765, as a result of Special Act 14 – 15 enacted by the General Assembly and signed by Governor Malloy last year and of DORS Commissioner Amy Porter’s Report to Human Services and Education Committees, December, 2014:

- 1) Update the qualifications and requirements in accordance with the national professional certifying body, the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf;
- 2) Clarifying the areas of interpreting settings, more avenues or options, and in phases for the individuals to qualify and secure interpreter certification(s), especially for interpreters working in educational settings, and the institution of a registering fee for all interpreters and any business entity, within the state or located out of state providing interpreting services within the state, by electronic or other means, i.e. remote access.

However, there is **one glaring omission** from this Bill #6765. **There is no provision for a within state standards and monitoring board** as strongly recommended by the CRID Task Force to oversee and ensure compliance, investigate complaints, assess penalties to those not in compliance, and to educate those who are securing interpreting services. This is a critical component for overall effectiveness of implementing upgraded interpreter standards in various settings across the state. This mechanism will greatly assist Connecticut to be in compliance with Federal and state laws - ***Section 504, ADA, IDEA, and Connecticut Public Act 12-173 mandating access and qualified interpreting services to Deaf and Hard of Hearing citizens - children, youth and adults - in Connecticut.***

Accordingly, the CRID Task Force on Updating Interpreter Standards is submitting to the Human Services Committee a proposed amendment to add a new Section 2 for an Interpreter Standards and Monitoring Board to this Raised HB #6765 for consideration. We estimate that \$100,000 will be needed to cover salary and benefits of one professional staff and basic operational costs. Thus, an appropriation of this amount is respectfully requested to fund this cost-effective and critical within state mechanism, composed of knowledgeable board members serving voluntarily, in order to implement this important proposed legislation.

In this present state of economy that the State of Connecticut is facing, we are fully aware of concerns regarding costs. However, deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind citizens not being appropriately served would ultimately have much greater costs – serious consequences for these citizens in educational, legal, medical, and community situations and for the State of Connecticut as well.

In summary, this proposed bill to update and strengthen interpreter standards along with the proposed amendment to add this new Section 2 are in response to the needs, raised expectations, and wide spread disregard for current interpreter law within Connecticut. These two pieces of proposed legislation are strongly endorsed by the Connecticut Association of the Deaf, the Connecticut Coalition of Organizations Serving the Deaf, and the Connecticut Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf.

Thank you for your consideration and support of this proposed appropriation to fund an Interpreter Standards and Monitoring Board as part of the proposed Raised HR #6765.